I have the dress still, and, looking at it the other day, I wondered what leading lady now would consent to wear it.

At all its best points, Henry's Hamlet was susceptible of absurd imitation. Think of this well, young actors, who are content to play for safety, to avoid ridicule at all costs, to be "natural"—oh, word most vilely abused 1 What sort of *naturalness* is this of Hamlet's ?

" O, villain, villain, smiling damned villain! "

Henry Irving's imitators cotild make people burst with laughter when they took off his delivery of that line. And, indeed, the orignal, too, was almost provocative of laughter —rightly so, for such emotional indignation has its funny as well as its terrible aspect. The mad, and all are mad who have, as Socrates put it, "a divine release from the common ways of men," may speak ludicrously, even when they speak the truth.

All great acting has a certain strain of extravagance which the imitators catch hold of and give us the eccentric body without the sublime soul.

From the first I saw this extravagance, this bizarrerie in Henry Irving's acting. I noticed, too, its infinite variety. In ” Hamlet/' during the first scene with Horatio, Maxcellus and Bernardo, he began by being very absent and distant. He exchanged greetings sweetly and gently, but he was the visionary. His feet might be on the ground, but his head was towards the stars " where the eternal are." Years later he said to me of another actor in " Hamlet": " *He* would never have seen the ghost." Well, there was never

any doubt that Henry Irving saw it, and it was through his acting in the Horatio scene that lie made us sure.

As a bad actor befogs Shakespeare's meaning, so a good actor illuminates it. Bit by bit as Horatio talks, Hamlet